

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 AID-05 IGA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1162

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6314

MURPHY FROM SEELYE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LE

SUBJECT: AUH

REF: DAMASCUS 4556

1. APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN OVER AUH PUBLIC IMAGE AND POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS FROM SYRIAN GOVERNMENT OR ARMY. WE RECOGNIZE PRBLEM AND FOR SOME TIME HAVE BEEN CONCERNED OVER GROWING IMAGE AUH AS PALESTINIAN HOSPITAL. SITUATION IS COMPLEX AND WE UNDERSTAND HOW SYRIANS MIGHT FEEL PERPLEXED. AUH IS GUARDED BY PLA AND UNTIL ONE MONTH AGO WAS UNDER FATAH PROTECTION. FATAH HAS SAID OPENLY IT WILL DO ANYTHING KEEP AUH FUNCTIONING. RECENT EVIDENCES ARE DELIVERIES TO AUH DURING PAST 48 HOURS THREE TRUCK LOADS GENERATOR FUEL AT TIME ZAHRANI REFINERY BURNING AND FUEL EXTREMELY SCARCE. ON JULY 16 PLO DELIVERED SUPPLY OF FLOUR TO AUH.

2. AUH CLEARLY THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEST BEIRUT MEDICAL FACILITY FOR PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS, BUT IT CONTINUES SERVE LARGE NON-COMBATTANT AND CHRISTIAN

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COMMUNITY. STATISTICS TO COMBAT SYRIAN SUSPICIONS

INCLUDE:

A. FROM JULY 1975-JUNE 1976 OF SOME 116,000
PATIENT DAYS, 72 PERCENT WERE CASUALTY PATIENT DAYS.
AT LEAST HALF CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.
MANY CASUALTIES ARE CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIAN PATIENTS
ARE IN HOSPITAL NOW.
B. ONE ENTIRE FLOOR OF HOSPITAL IS MATERNITY
WARD AND OB/GYN.
C. CHILDRENS WARD OF 60 BEDS STILL FUNCTIONING.
D. OUTPATIENT FACILITIES SERVICING ALL GROUPS
INCLUDING LARGE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF WEST BEIRUT.

3. DR. ASPER SAYS TO HIS KNOWLEDGE NO PATIENT IN NEED
HAS EVER BEEN TURNED AWAY, THOUGH THERE ARE
UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF PEOPLE BEING TURNED AWAY BEFORE
THEY REACH HOSPITAL. AUH NOW GIVES PRIORITY TO
BADLY WOUNDED OR SERIOUSLY ILL, RESULTING IN LARGE
PERCENTAGE WOUNDED FIGHTERS. AS RIGHTIST FIGHTERS DO
NOT HAVE ACCESS TO HOSPITAL, FIGHTERS ARE PALESTINIAN/
LEFTISTS. CURRENTLY AUH GIVING ADMISSION PREFERENCE
TO SEVERE HEAD AND CHEST WOUNDS DUE OTHER HOSPITALS
LACK OF FACILITIES SUCH AS RESPIRATORS.

4. ALL NOT MOONLIGHT AND ROSES BETWEEN AUH AND
PALESTINIAN/LEFTISTS. ARMED MEN STEAL WATER FROM
HOSPITAL'S LIMITED SUPPLY AND RELIEVE NEIGHBORHOOD
BAKERIES OF BREAD BAKED FOR HOSPITAL ON HOSPITAL
ELECTRICAL HOOKUP. NOR WILL FATAH VERY OFTEN PAY
FOR USE OF HOSPITAL BEDS, ADDING TO AUH'S ALREADY
SERIOUS FINANCIAL DISTRESS. MANY STAFF MEMBERS ARE
CHRISTIANS, ESPECIALLY NURSES, AND THERE IS INCREASING
STAFF DISAFFECTION AND ABSENCE DUE IN PART TO FEELINGS
OF AIDING THE ENEMY.

5. SECURITY AT HOSPITAL REQUIRES GUARDS WHO ENFORCE
CHECK IN OF WEAPONS, ALTHOUGH WEAPONS ALLOWED IN
LOBBIES. SYSTEM DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK AND CERTAIN
HIGH LEVEL PERSONS ALLOWED CARRY WEAPONS OR HAVE ARMED
GUARDS IN HOSPITAL CORRIDORS AND ROOMS. ASPER ONCE
REPLACED MAN AT CHECK-IN DESK WHO WAS BENDING RULES
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TOO FAR, DEMONSTRATING ABILITY TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST
SOME CONTROL. IN EARLY JUNE WHEN FATAH FORCEFULLY
REMOVED PLA PATIENT FROM HOSPITAL FOR INTERROGATION,
ASPER'S INDIGNATION RESULTED IN RETURN OF PATIENT
THREE DAYS LATER. FATAH STATED THAT ASPER'S
PERSISTENCE HAD FREED THE MAN. ASPER SAYS, "WE
CONSIDER OUR PROTECTORS AS OUR GUESTS SO WE CAN KEEP
CONTROL. WE HAVE INFORMED THEM THEIR SOLE PURPOSE

IS TO KEEP ARMED PEOPLE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL."

6. IN CERTAIN SENSE, AUH IS HELD CAPTIVE BY SOME OF ITS PATIENTS AND THEIR ARMED FRIENDS. YET THE FIRST TO SUFFER FROM SUPPLY BLOCKADE OR HOSPITAL SHUTDOWN WOULD BE CIVILIANS, AS FIGHTERS HAVE HISOTRY OF FINDING WHAT THEY NEED AND TAKINT IT FROM THOSE WHO ARE WEAKER.

7. ONE SPIN-OFF EFFECT WHICH HAS REDOUNDED TO U.S. FAVOR IS CHANGE OF PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD AUB COMPLEX. WWHERE RANK-AND-FILE PALESINIANS AND LEFTISTS WHO HAVE FOUGHT WITH THEM ONCE ATTACKED AUB AS AMERICAN "IMPERIALIST" BASTION (CONTRIBUTI G TO STUDENT CAMPUS TROUBLES), SEVERAL LEBANESE HAVE EXPRESSED VIEW TO ME THAT SERVICES HOSPITAL HAS PERFORMED WILL EASE AUB'S STUDENT POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE. SEELYE

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